

FEDERAL GUIDELINES DEMAND STRICT FOCUS ON INFORMATION SECURITY

ABOUT ATLAS TOOL & DIE WORKS, INC. Atlas Tool & Die Works is a family-owned, full service precision manufacturer that provides specialized machining and turning of tight tolerance parts, precision sheet metal fabrication, metal stamping, and complex engineered assemblies. Based in Lyons, Illinois, Atlas Tool has around 60 employees.

THE CHALLENGE. As a Department of Defense contractor, Atlas Tool needed to ensure its systems complied with the new NIST Special Publication 800-171 requirement: Protecting Controlled Unclassified Information in Nonfederal Information Systems and Organizations. Lacking a full-time information technology staff, Atlas Tool needed extra support to address the government regulation, especially given the requirement's tight timeframe. The company called on the Illinois Manufacturing Excellence Center (IMEC), part of the MEP National Network™, as a trusted resource to help interpret the guidelines, assess vulnerabilities, and execute improvements before the strict compliance deadline.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. With IMEC serving as project manager, Atlas Tool began to decipher the NIST checklist for compliance, breaking it down into understandable steps. A review of processes determined whether the company was fully compliant, partially compliant, or completely lacking in each requirement. Based on this assessment, IMEC determined that Atlas Tool had a 40 percent compliance rating. The company established an improvement plan for network setup, policies and procedures, IT system requirements, workforce rules and corresponding training, and an implementation timeline to ensure full compliance before the deadline. Atlas Tool invested in physical hardware, including server room locks with passcode protection, and changed settings on the server and router to track who was accessing files and create a log for forensics records. It also implemented stricter email encryption.

"Going through this process was great for our organization," said Zach Mottl, Chief Alignment Officer for Atlas Tool. "It's all about developing good habits." As a small business, Atlas Tool was accustomed to creating workarounds to simplify administrative practices, but that is not an option when it comes to cybersecurity. The company worked with IMEC to provide workforce training to help Atlas Tool employees understand the security precautions and reporting protocols. The requirements ensure Atlas Tool is protecting its data, preventing intrusions, and notifying the appropriate people in the event of a security compromise. "Addressing the compliance requirements was important for us to become a more robust and secure organization," said Mottl. "I know all businesses would benefit from the assessment, not just defense contractors."

"I don't know how we would have done this without IMEC. As a small company, we're limited on financial and administrative resources for this type of compliance. Our internal people are stretched thin, so having IMEC as an extension of our team has been tremendous."

-Zach Mottl, Chief Alignment Officer

RESULTS



Obtained **100%** compliance to NIST SP 800-171 in 6 months, up from 40%



Invested in hardware and software updates



Provided workforce training in security standards

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